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April 26, 2006

Zoryan Institute for Contemporary
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Dear Sirs:

I recently had my late grandfather's papers translated from Armenian and Armeno-Turkish to English. Among the sermons, meditations and letters was a draft of a letter he wrote in 1919 from Marash, where he was Vicar, to Catholicos Sahag the Second of The Great House of Cilicia in Beirut. I hope this will be of some use for your archives.

The letter describes in detail the situation in Marash after the French desertion and asks for help. I have enclosed a copy of the letter draft as well as the translation, which was done by Rev. Zenas Ilanjan, a retired clergyman who at one time was also a professor of English literature at Haigazian College. Rev. Ilanjan's address and contact numbers, should you need them, are:

I have also enclosed a copy of the obituary of my grandfather, Rev. Sahag Der Bedrosian, so that you will have some background information on him.

Thank you and please accept my admiration and gratitude for the vital work that the Zoryan Institute is doing.

Cordially,



Karen Bedrosian Richardson

Enc:
cc: Zoryan, Toronto

His Holiness
Catholicos Sahag the Second

Your Holiness:

The unprecedented events of Marash have been, I believe, committed to Your attention. I would not burden Your Holiness with them any further. Nevertheless, I would like to describe briefly the present deplorable situation in which the people find themselves, humbly requesting Your Holiness to seek a remedy, urgently if possible, to alleviate their suffering.

There are at present more than 5500 people in Marash, excepting the orphans in various institutions. About 3000 fear – stricken and disillusioned people have left the city. Ever since the French dishonorably abandoned the city, the remnants of the decimated population constantly live the horror of massacre and deportation; and for the past year, the conscription of Armenians has exacerbated their misery.

Until now, we have not been able to venture to the wells, valleys, and filthy places, to collect the bones of our loved ones for decent interment. We cannot even bury the dead without the supervision of the police, and we cannot muster enough courage to weep over our deceased loved ones. When the people appear in the streets or shopping centers, they are subjected to all kinds of defamation and denigration. Until now, no Armenian has been able to reclaim ownership of his properties outside the city. It is impossible for him to go to his vineyard, orchard, or field. He has no security of life. The Turks have taken over the properties of Armenians, and the government continues collecting taxes on the properties that have been wrested from their rightful owners. The remorseless mob continues destroying houses and churches; hewn blocks of stone are hauled away. Many Armenians cannot pursue their business activities in the marketplace for fear of their lives. They are confined to their houses. Very few Armenians manage to do business under the protection of a Turk. The Turkish government confiscated the properties of those who endangered their lives to save their fellow Armenians from fire and sword, even to the last day the French were abandoning the city. The rescuers were considered as enemies of the government. There is general fear, insecurity, and perplexity, as the present situation makes it impossible to work, to conduct business, or to safeguard personal property. The Turks are flagrantly harvesting the benefits of Armenian labor and proprietorship.

The care of the Near East Relief has had a most beneficial Providential impact upon the suffering people, to the consolation of widows and orphans. Lately, however, Near East Relief officials have received orders from the government to discontinue their assistance. Under these most deplorable circumstances, the grieving people of Marash are constrained to relinquish their fatherland and abandon all that they had achieved through hard toil, and in rare cases, trade extensive properties for a pitiful amount. In this lamentable situation, local Turks and officials approach the Armenians, and with connivance and affectation, query patronizingly, Why are you leaving? Who is bothering you? They are well aware of

everything that is happening. They then express a round of pretended sympathy, Your departure is quite justifiable; you are expecting salvation from abroad; it might as well come from these stones; it is impossible to live here. The situation is fast deteriorating; oppression is mounting rapidly.

We hereby beseech Your Holiness, and implore Your help:

1. To liberate our young people from the iron yoke of Turkish conscription.
2. In view of the fact that here Armenians are deprived of freedom of speech, cannot work nor reclaim their vineyards and fields, are confined to dark and humid prison – like huts, and are constantly subjected to base humiliation, we entreat Your Holiness to kindly suggest ways of ameliorating the situation.
3. Armenians are going through misery and deprivation. Would it be possible for Your Holiness to find a means to reinstate the relief work?

We humbly present these vital and urgent matters to Your Holiness.

Kissing Your anointed hand, we remain,

Respectfully Yours,

Father Sahag Der Bedrosian

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REVEREND FATHER SAHAG DER BEDROSIAN

On Saturday, October 8, 1927, Reverend Father Sahag Der Bedrosian, pastor of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Troy, entered his eternal rest.

He was born on March 26, 1877, in Marash. He was the 21st priest in his religious dynasty. He received his elementary education in the local Central School; and attended the American St. Paul College in Tarsus and the American Theological Seminary in Marash. After graduation, he worked as teacher for four years in his birthplace.

He was married in 1903, and was ordained as priest in 1906, by His Holiness Catholicos Sahag the Second, of the Great House of Cilicia, in the Mother See of Sis, as pastor of the parish of St. Stephen Armenian Apostolic Church.

In 1907, he was appointed Vicar by popular demand. He served faithfully until 1915. His spiritual services have won him the love and respect of his people in Marash and all other Armenians. After the tragedy of Adana, he was imprisoned by the Turkish government. Once out of prison, he redoubled his national efforts and raised the state of national schools and activities to an enviable level.

In 1915, he was exiled to Deir-ez-Zor, and then transferred to Aleppo to face the military tribunal, on account of a letter he had written to Boghos Nubar Pasha. He was imprisoned in Aleppo 15 times. Whenever he was out of prison, he continued serving his people in various ways. Again he was transferred to Deir-ez-Zor and subjected to indescribable tortures. Upon the British occupation of Syria, he returned to Aleppo, and later, to his birthplace, Marash, where he founded the first National Union.

Barely a year had elapsed, when the massacre of Marash befell the people in 1920, in the very presence of French troops. This oppressed him greatly, and something crashed in his indomitable soul.

When the Turkish government decreed the deportation of Armenians in 1922. Reverend Father Sahag Der Bedrosian was transferred to Aleppo. After a sojourn here of five months, he was invited to the pastorate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Troy. Along with his spiritual functions, he successfully convened the various organizations for unity, thus enhancing the enlightenment of the Church. He endeared himself to all the people of Troy and Watervliet, and earned the respect of American clergymen too.

The ceremony of the final anointing and interment took place in the church of his pastorate. His Eminence Archbishop Dirair Markarian conducted Holy Mass and performed the Anointing with the assistance of Reverend Fathers Mattheos Hekemian and Bedros Hagopian, who had been invited from New York. The whole ceremony was very moving. There was no standing space in the church. All eyes welled tears; especially when clergy and choristers voiced, with one accord of harmonious intonation, the Armenian hymns, interspersed with psalms: "Hail to Thee, Holy Church; hail to Thee, Altar of Holiness; hail to servants of the Lord; I am returning to my Creator."

And now came the final request and blessing of the anointed, departed servant of God, always faithful to the fundamental principles of the Armenian Apostolic Church – of the people and for the people. At this juncture, tears were converted to prayers, as every head bowed down to receive the last blessing of the good shepherd: "Pray for our fathers, our brethren, and our children; and may Christ our Savior confer His blessing upon all, and

keep you in the safety of His presence until such time as you are called from above, and may the peace of the Lord be with you, for ever and ever. Amen."

For an extended moment, heart-rending silence reigned. The people bid farewell to the shepherd, and the coffin was ceremoniously carried out of the church.

It was past three o'clock when we left the cemetery. The ceremony had begun at eight-thirty in the morning.

Reverend Father Sahag Der Bedrosian is survived by his spouse and four children.

It had been the longing of the departed Reverend Father to complete the altar of the newly-purchased church edifice, for him to be able to conduct Holy Mass and Worship Service before his passing, and he strongly sensed his imminent death. It had been the wish of the Reverend Father, and now the request of Mrs. Der Bedrosian, that in-lieu-of-flowers donations be made toward the completion of the altar.

We stand in veneration to his sacred memory and exemplary life. All the Armenians of Marash and myriads of friends bemoan the untimely death of the Reverend Father; especially distressed are the parishioners of Troy, who enjoyed his spiritual leadership for the final lustrum of his illustrious life. They all extend their condolences to the family and relatives of the Reverend Father Sahag Der Bedrosian.

(Translation of the obituary, signed "Loossaper," in the Armenian publication, "Hayasdani Gotchaag.")